



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### U.S. DELEGATION TO REVIEW INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE TRADE ISSUES AT FIFTH BIENNIAL "CITES" MEETING

Trade issues involving species as varied as Nile crocodiles, hooded seals, gyrfalcons, and green sea turtles will highlight the fifth regular international meeting of member nations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), being held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from April 22 to May 3.

Members of the U.S. delegation, made up of representatives of the Departments of Interior, State, and Agriculture and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, left this week to attend the conference and represent the U.S. Government at the conference.

Foremost among items that will be discussed at the CITES meeting are proposals by Surinam, France, and the United Kingdom to change the trade status of certain captive-raised populations of green sea turtles. These proposals seek the transfer of those populations of green sea turtles in Surinam, Europa and Tromelin Islands, and the Cayman Islands that qualify for a ranching exemption, from Appendix I to Appendix II of the CITES agreement. Approval of these proposals would be the first step in the resumption of trade in green sea turtle products from ranching operations.

Among other proposals under consideration at the CITES meeting are requests to:

- Change the trade status of populations of the Nile crocodile, proposed by Malawi and Mozambique by transferring those countries' populations from Appendix I to Appendix II;
- Extend CITES status to the hooded seal, proposed by Sweden; and
- Increase protection for the North American population of the gyrfalcon, proposed by Denmark and Norway.

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The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora is an international agreement among 89 nations to regulate international trade in about 2,400 animal species and 30,000 plant species, in order to prevent their overexploitation. The United States joined CITES in 1975, at the time the treaty became effective.

CITES operates through a system of permits that are issued by management authorities in each member country. CITES species are listed in three separate appendices, each reflecting the appropriate status of such species in the wild. "Appendix I" species are those animals and plants facing extinction that are or may be affected by trade. "Appendix II" species are those not necessarily facing extinction, but which may become so unless their trade is strictly controlled. "Appendix III" species are those which any CITES member nation has identified as meriting protection within its borders, and for which it needs the cooperation of other member nations in controlling trade.

Depending upon the appendix in which a species is listed, a variety of import and export documents may be required from countries on either end of the wildlife trade. These requirements have allowed CITES to establish and maintain a worldwide system of controls on international trade.

At biennial meetings of the CITES nations, additions, changes, and removals of species on the various appendices are considered, as well as administrative and technical changes in the agreement.